RATNAVALI

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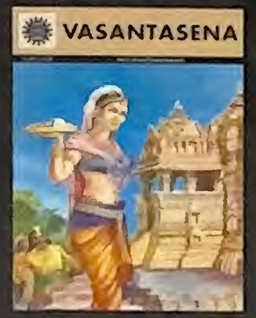

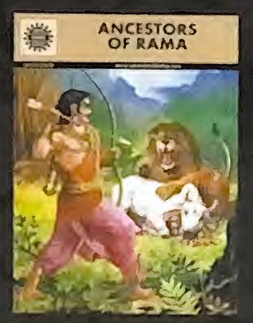

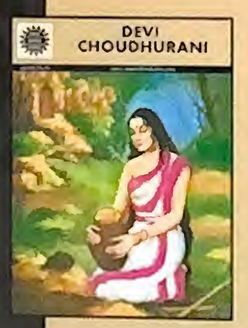

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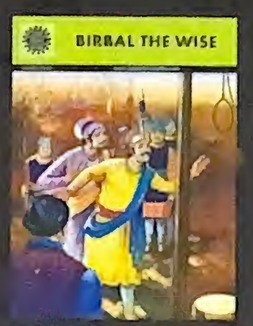

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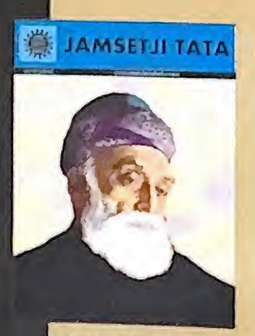

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RATNAVALI

A ROYAL PROPHESY IS HAPPILY FULFILLED

Vol 643 | ₹50

RATNAVALI

PRINCESS RATNAVALI, THE DAUGHTER OF VIKRAMABAHU, KING OF SIMHALA, WAS GOING TO KAUSHAMBI TO MARRY KING UDAYANA.

VASUBHUTI, THE KING'S MINISTER, WHO WAS ESCORTING RATNAVALI, TURNED TO BABHRAVYA, THE ENVOY FROM KAUSHAMBI.

OUR KING WAS SAD TO HEAR THAT HIS NIECE, KING UDAYANA'S QUEEN, VASAVADATTA, DIED IN THE FIRE AT LAVANAKA.

SO KING VIKRAMA-BAHU BELIEVES THE RUMOUR SPREAD BY THE MINISTER YAUGANDHARAYANA!

TO KEEP THE RELATION-SHIP BETWEEN THE TWO FAMILIES ALIVE, HE HAS AGREED TO SEND OUR PRINCESS TO KAUSHAMBI.

HOW WILL HE REACT WHEN HE DISCOVERS THAT VASAVADATTA IS VERY MUCH ALIVE ?

YOUNG RATNAVALI WAS THINKING ABOUT VASAVADATTA AND KING UDAYANA.

MY COUSIN, WHOM I HAVE NEVER MET, IS DEAD. THE KING LOVED HER DEEPLY. WILL I BE ABLE TO WIN HIS HEART?

SUDDENLY—

WHAT'S HAPPENING? THE SHIP HAS STARTED TO ROLL!

A SUDDEN STORM HAD BEGUN. THE HUGE WAVES TOSSED THE SHIP ABOUT...

HELP!

...AND IT BROKE INTO A THOUSAND PIECES.

OH GOD!

RATNAVALI MANAGED TO CLUTCH A PLANK...

...AND KEEP AFLOAT.

THERE IS NOT A SOUL IN SIGHT! WHAT SHALL I DO?

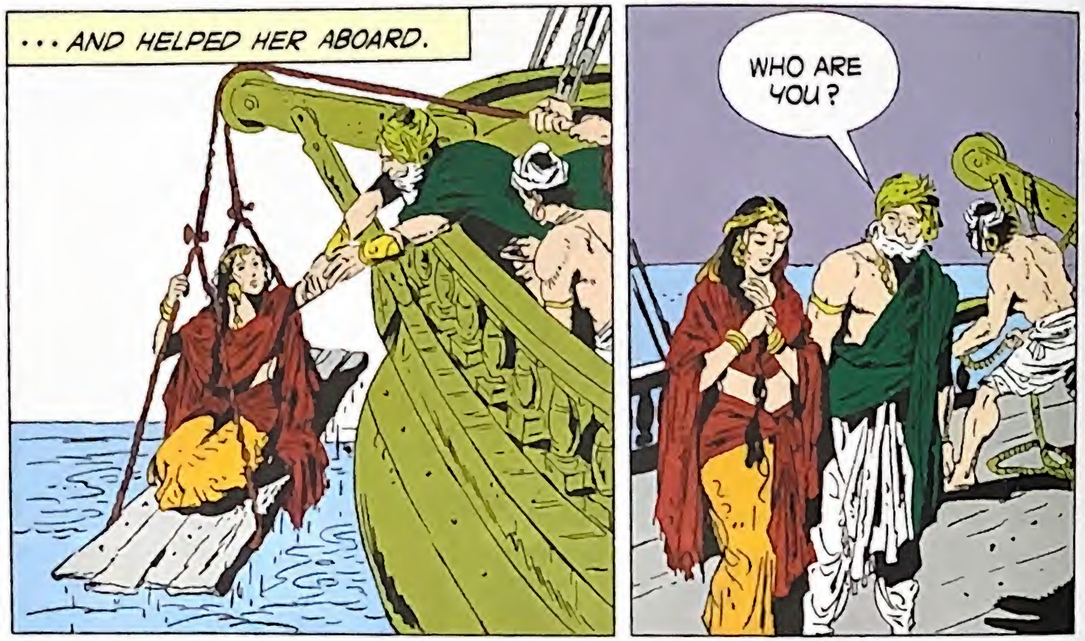
FORTUNATELY, SOON AFTER, SHE SPOTTED ANOTHER SHIP.

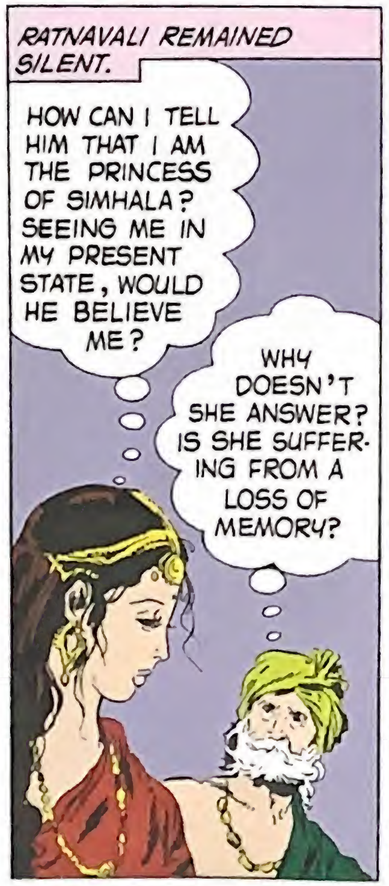
HELP!

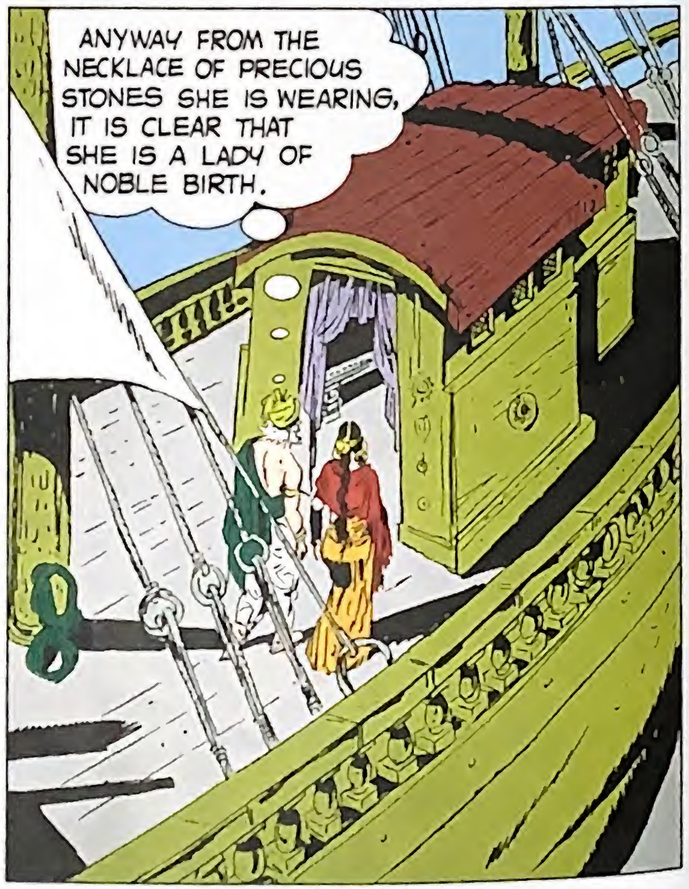
THE MASTER OF THE SHIP, A MERCHANT WHO WAS SAILING TO KAUSHAMBI, HEARD THE CRY.

A GIRL IN DISTRESS!

HE ORDERED THE SHIP TO TURN AROUND TOWARDS HER...


. . . AND HELPED HER ABOARD.
WHO ARE YOU?

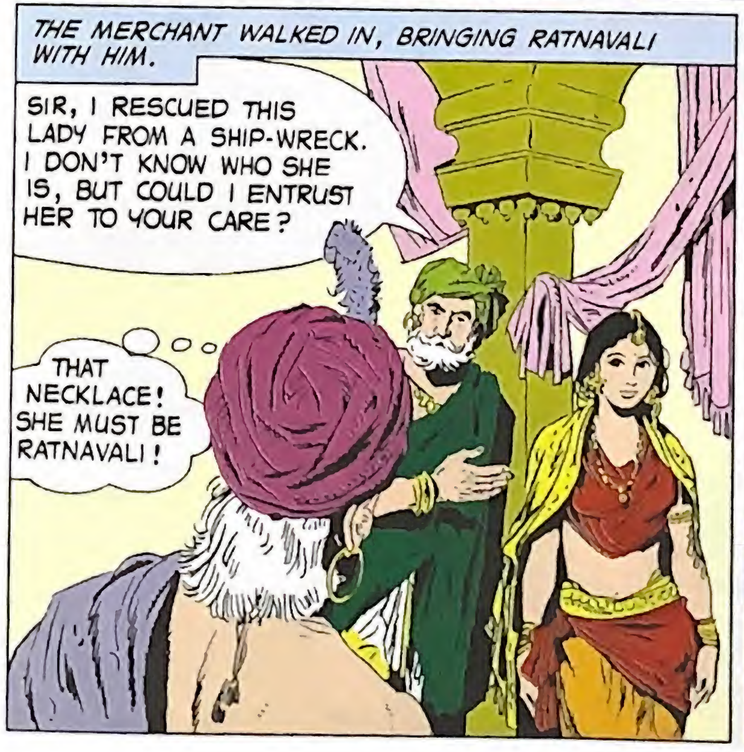

RATNAVALI REMAINED SILENT.
HOW CAN I TELL HIM THAT I AM THE PRINCESS OF SIMHALA? SEEING ME IN MY PRESENT STATE, WOULD HE BELIEVE ME?
WHY DOESN'T SHE ANSWER? IS SHE SUFFERING FROM A LOSS OF MEMORY?


ANYWAY FROM THE NECKLACE OF PRECIOUS STONES SHE IS WEARING, IT IS CLEAR THAT SHE IS A LADY OF NOBLE BIRTH.

MEANWHILE AT KAUSHAMBI, YAUGANDHARAYANA, KING UDAYANA'S LOYAL MINISTER, WAS ANXIOUSLY PACING UP AND DOWN HIS CHAMBER.
PRINCESS RATNAVALI WILL SOON BE HERE. AND I HAVE NOT YET SPOKEN TO THE KING ABOUT HER.

HE LOVES VASAVADATTA TOO MUCH. HE WILL NOT AGREE TO MARRY ANOTHER WOMAN AND YET. . . .

JUST THEN A GUARD ENTERED.
BRING HIM IN
SIR, A MERCHANT WANTS TO MEET YOU.


THE MERCHANT WALKED IN, BRINGING RATNAVALI WITH HIM.
SIR, I RESCUED THIS LADY FROM A SHIP-WRECK. I DON'T KNOW WHO SHE IS, BUT COULD I ENTRUST HER TO YOUR CARE?
THAT NECKLACE! SHE MUST BE RATNAVALI!

I WILL NOT LET HER SEE THAT I KNOW WHO SHE IS. I WILL TAKE HER TO THE QUEEN AND. . . .

YAUGANDHARAYANA TOOK RATNAVALI TO QUEEN VASAVADATTA'S CHAMBERS.

O QUEEN, THIS IS SAGARIKA. SHE HAS NO ONE TO TURN TO MAY I ENTRUST HER TO YOUR CARE?

QUEEN VASAVADATTA LOOKED AFFECTIONATELY AT THE GIRL.

SHE WILL BE MY COMPANION.

YOU ARE VERY KIND. PERMIT ME TO TAKE YOUR LEAVE.

VASAVADATTA DID NOT KNOW THAT SAGARIKA WAS NONE OTHER THAN RATNAVALI, HER COUSIN.

AS YAUGANDHARAYANA LEFT—

EXCELLENT! RATNAVALI IS NOW BOUND TO COME ACROSS THE KING AND THEN I WILL LET MATTERS TAKE THEIR OWN COURSE.

SAGARIKA IS VERY CHARMING! I SHOULD TAKE CARE THAT THE KING DOESN'T MEET HER.

VASAVADATTA TURNED TO SAGARIKA.

MY FRIEND, I WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY HERE. YOU SHALL BE IN CHARGE OF MEDHAVINI, OUR BELOVED TALKING-BIRD. SUSANGATA WILL SHOW YOU WHERE IT IS.

SAGARIKA WAS HAPPY AND ENJOYED HER LIGHT DUTIES.

THE QUEEN IS KIND AND GENTLE.

THEN CAME THE FESTIVAL OF MADANA, THE GOD OF LOVE.

SAGARIKA, TODAY THE QUEEN WILL WORSHIP MADANA IN THE GARDEN.

O SUSANGATA, I WOULD LOVE TO BE THERE, BUT I HAVE TO LOOK AFTER MEDHAVINI.

I WILL DO THAT FOR YOU, SAGARIKA. GO AND ATTEND THE CEREMONY.

SUSANGATA, YOU ARE SO GOOD.

SO CARRYING MATERIALS FOR WORSHIP, SAGARIKA FOLLOWED THE QUEEN INTO THE GARDEN.

MEANWHILE, PEOPLE WERE OUT IN THE STREETS, CELEBRATING THE FESTIVAL BY THROWING COLOURS AT ONE ANOTHER. FROM THE PALACE KING UDAYANA WATCHED THE MERRY-MAKING WITH VASANTAKA, THE COURT JESTER

JUST THEN TWO OF THE QUEEN'S MAIDS ENTERED.

VICTORY TO YOUR MAJESTY! THE QUEEN COMMANDS... NO, NO... THE QUEEN REQUESTS....

THE WORD 'COMMANDS' IS MORE APPROPRIATE ON MADANA'S FESTIVAL. TELL ME WHAT THE QUEEN COMMANDS.

THE QUEEN REQUESTS YOUR PRESENCE AT MAKARANDA GARDEN WHERE SHE WILL BE WORSHIPPING THE GOD OF LOVE.

WE WILL COME AT ONCE.

WHEN THE KING REACHED THE GARDEN—

FRIEND, FLOWERS ARE IN BLOOM AND THE HUMMING OF BEES SOUNDS LIKE THE JINGLE OF WOMEN'S ANKLETS.

THAT SOUND IS NOT CAUSED BY BEES BUT BY THE ANKLETS OF THE QUEEN'S COMPANIONS!

YOU ARE RIGHT, VASANTAKA. I SEE THEM COMING.

MEANWHILE VASAVADATTA HAD APPROACHED THE RED ASHOKA TREE.

BRING ME THE MATERIALS FOR WORSHIP.

SAGARIKA STEPPED FORWARD.

HERE THEY ARE, YOUR MAJESTY.

HOW DID SAGARIKA GET HERE? THE KING MUST NOT SEE HER!

SAGARIKA, YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE LEFT MEDHAVINI. GIVE THAT TRAY TO KANCHANA MALA AND GO BACK.

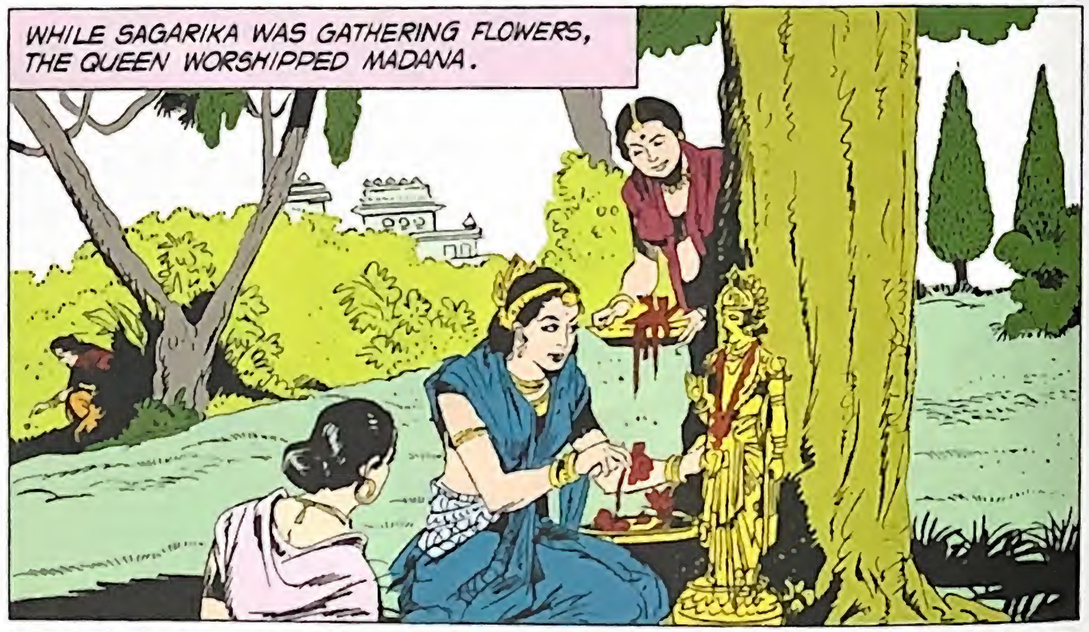
YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

SAGARIKA LEFT RELUCTANTLY.

SO I WON'T BE PRESENT WHILE MADANA IS WORSHIPPED.

I CAN'T BEAR TO MISS THE RITUAL. I'LL HIDE HERE AND WATCH IT.

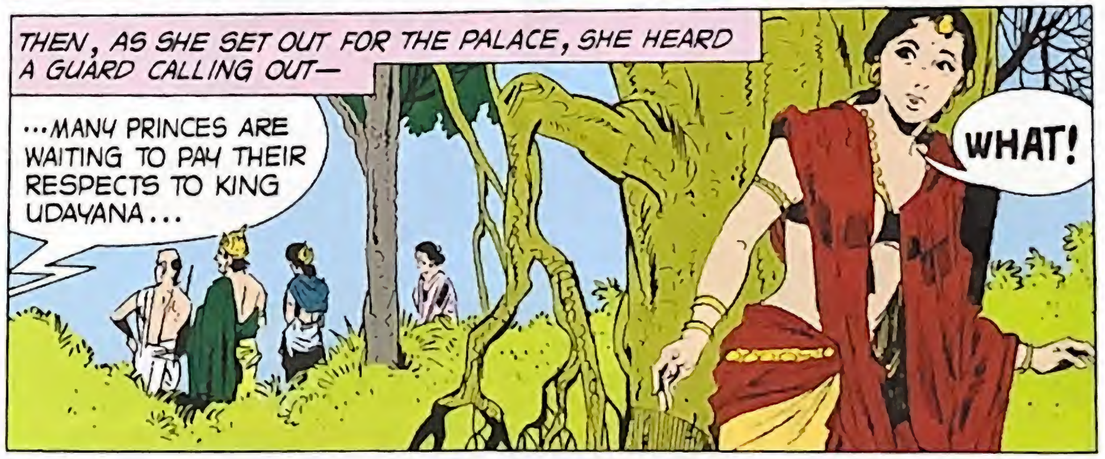
IN FACT, I COULD PICK SOME FLOWERS AND OFFER THEM TO THE GOD OF LOVE FROM HERE.


WHILE SAGARIKA WAS GATHERING FLOWERS, THE QUEEN WORSHIPPED MADANA.

THEN SHE TURNED TO UDAYANA WHO HAD JUST JOINED HER.
MY LORD, PLEASE SIT HERE AND ACCEPT MY WORSHIP.
AS YOU COMMAND, DEAR.

SUDDENLY SAGARIKA SAW THE KING—
OH! IN THIS COUNTRY MADANA COMES IN PERSON TO BE WORSHIPPED. IN MY COUNTRY WE HAVE ONLY HIS IMAGE TO WORSHIP!

THEN SAGARIKA OFFERED HER FLOWERS FROM WHERE SHE STOOD.
SALUTATIONS TO YOU, MADANA! MAY THIS VISION OF YOU BRING JOY TO MY LIFE!


THEN, AS SHE SET OUT FOR THE PALACE, SHE HEARD A GUARD CALLING OUT—
...MANY PRINCES ARE WAITING TO PAY THEIR RESPECTS TO KING UDAYANA...
WHAT!

SAGARIKA TURNED BACK.
SO THAT WAS KING UDAYANA AND I AM BETROTHED TO HIM! THEN THE QUEEN MUST BE MY COUSIN, VASAVA-DATTA!

BUT IT CAN'T BE! VASAVADATTA DIED IN THE FIRE....

AS UDAYANA AND VASAVADATTA PASSED BY—

HOW HELPLESS I AM. I CAN'T EVEN LOOK UPON HIM, LET ALONE TALK TO HIM.

UDAYANA'S FACE HAUNTED SAGARIKA AND SHE HARDLY SLEPT THAT NIGHT. THE NEXT MORNING SHE WENT TO THE GARDEN HOUSE TAKING WITH HER A DRAWING BOARD, BRUSHES AND COLOURS.

I SAW HIM BUT FOR A MOMENT. YET MY HEART YEARNS FOR HIM.

AS SHE SAT DOWN AND PAINTED A PICTURE OF KING UDAYANA FROM MEMORY...

...SUSANGATA CREPT UP FROM BEHIND HER—

WHAT ARE YOU PAINTING, SAGARIKA?

SAGARIKA BLUSHED.

HOW CAN I TELL HER THE TRUTH?

NOW THAT MADANA'S FESTIVAL IS BEING CELEBRATED I HAVE DRAWN THE GOD OF LOVE.

YOU HAVE DRAWN MADANA WITHOUT HIS CONSORT, RATI, BY HIS SIDE!

LOOK, I WILL DRAW RATI HERE.

WHY, YOU'VE DRAWN MY PORTRAIT!

SUSANGATA LAUGHED MERRILY.

DON'T GET UPSET, DEAR. IF THE ONE YOU HAVE PAINTED IS MADANA THEN THE ONE I'VE PAINTED IS RATI.

SUSANGATA HAS DISCOVERED MY SECRET....

NOW TELL ME ALL.

I AM OVERCOME BY A SENSE OF SHAME. YOU MUSTN'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT THIS.

YOUR SECRET IS SAFE WITH ME. BUT THIS TALKING BIRD MAY BLURT OUT EVERYTHING...

BUT SAGARIKA DID NOT SEEM TO HEAR SUSANGATA'S WORDS.

I HAVE LOST MY HEART TO ONE WHO IS UNATTAINABLE! DEATH CAN BE MY ONLY REFUGE.

SAGARIKA, TAKE HEART.

JUST THEN, A FEROCIOUS MONKEY CAME BOUNDING IN.

LET'S RUN, SAGARIKA!

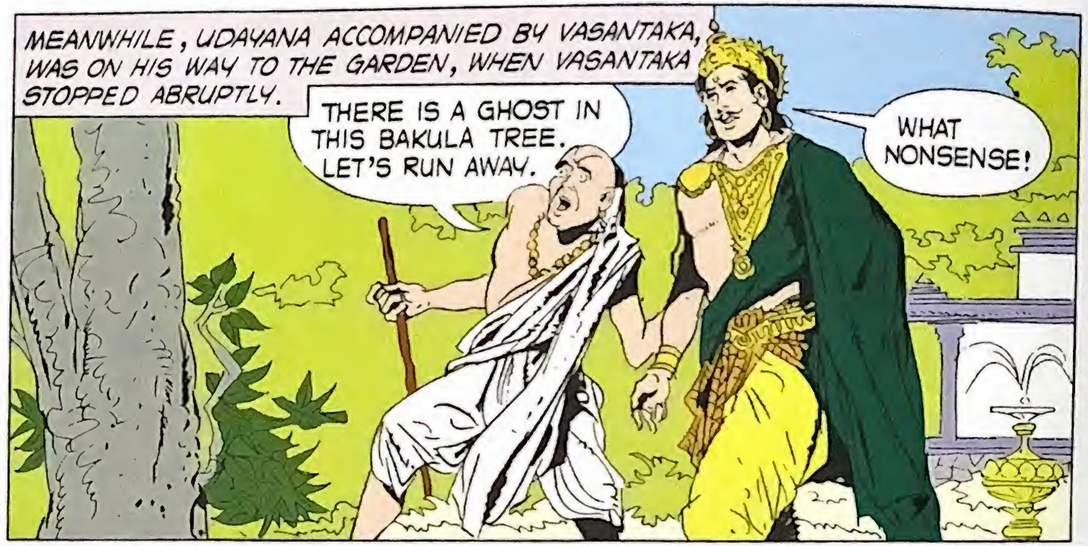
ATTRACTED BY THE FOOD IN THE CAGE, THE MONKEY OPENED IT. THE FRIGHTENED BIRD FLEW OUT.

MEANWHILE OUTSIDE—

SUSANGATA, SOMEONE MAY SEE THE DRAWING. WE SHOULD HAVE RUBBED IT OFF.

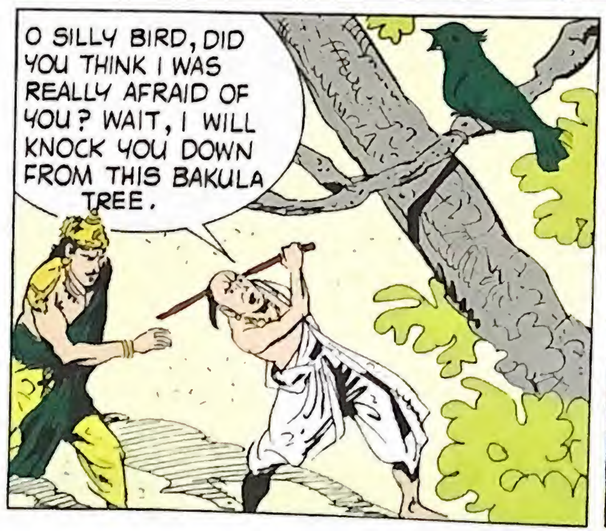
YOU HAVE SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS THAN THAT TO WORRY ABOUT. LOOK! MEDHAVINI HAS FLOWN AWAY.

AND WHAT IS WORSE, SHE HAS HEARD EVERY WORD WE UTTERED. WE MUST CATCH HER.

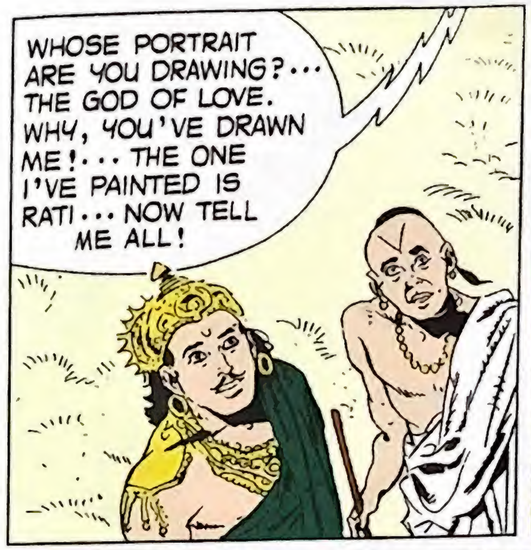

MEANWHILE, UDAYANA ACCOMPANIED BY VASANTAKA, WAS ON HIS WAY TO THE GARDEN, WHEN VASANTAKA STOPPED ABRUPTLY.
THERE IS A GHOST IN THIS BAKULA TREE. LET'S RUN AWAY.
WHAT NONSENSE!

BUT DO LISTEN. SOMEONE IS SPEAKING, YET NO ONE CAN BE SEEN. THE BODY-LESS ONE IS THE GHOST!

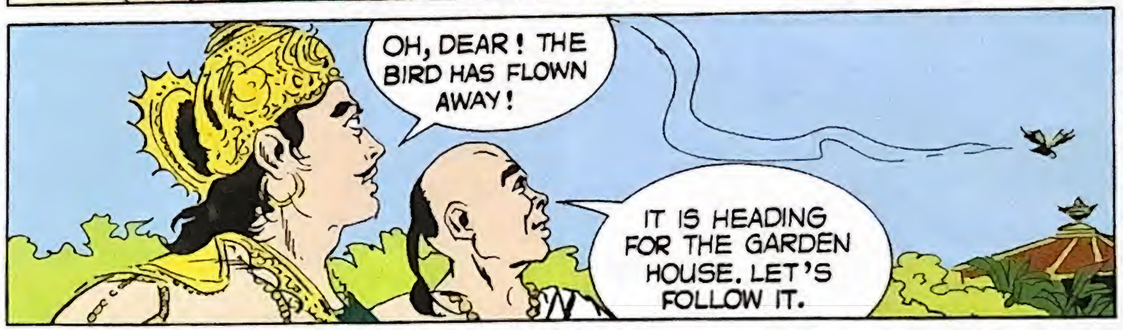
LOOK! IT'S ONLY A TALKING BIRD!
WHAT!

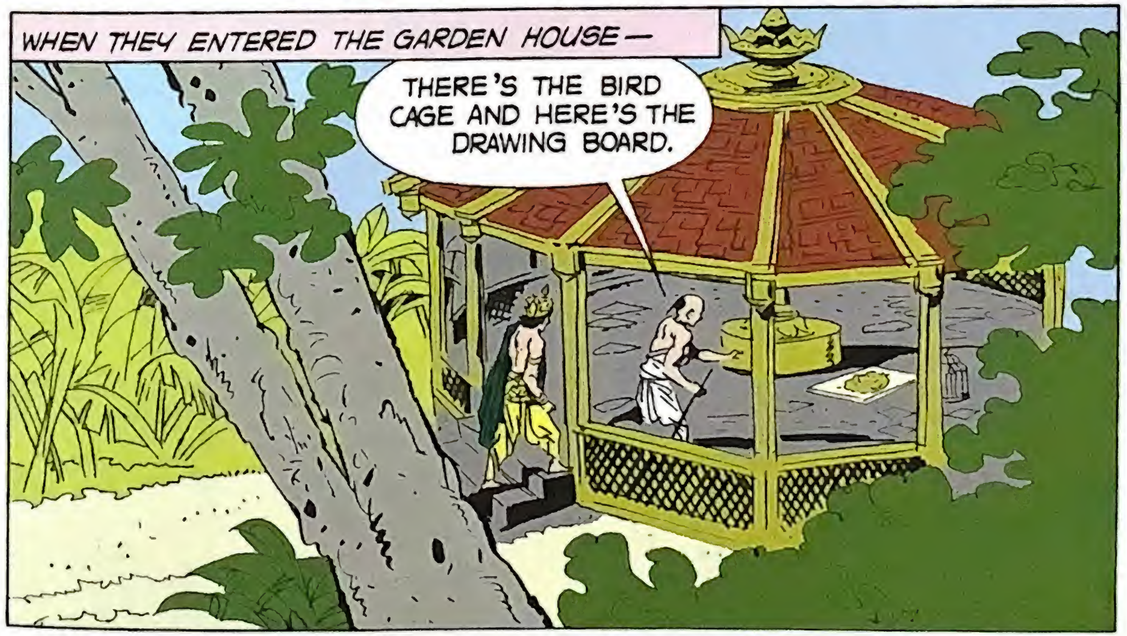

O SILLY BIRD, DID YOU THINK I WAS REALLY AFRAID OF YOU? WAIT, I WILL KNOCK YOU DOWN FROM THIS BAKULA TREE.

FOOL! SHE IS SAYING SOME-THING PLEASANT. LET'S LISTEN.


WHOSE PORTRAIT ARE YOU DRAWING?... THE GOD OF LOVE. WHY, YOU'VE DRAWN ME!... THE ONE I'VE PAINTED IS RATI... NOW TELL ME ALL!

VASANTAKA, THIS BIRD IS REPEATING THE CONVERSATION OF A LOVELORN GIRL WITH HER COMPANION.
THAT'S SO.


OH, DEAR! THE BIRD HAS FLOWN AWAY!
IT IS HEADING FOR THE GARDEN HOUSE. LET'S FOLLOW IT.


WHEN THEY ENTERED THE GARDEN HOUSE—
THERE'S THE BIRD CAGE AND HERE'S THE DRAWING BOARD.

MEANWHILE SAGARIKA AND SUSANGATA NOT FINDING THE BIRD, WERE RETURNING TO THE GARDEN HOUSE FOR THE PAINTING.

IT IS YOUR PORTRAIT! AND THAT OF A MAIDEN TOO!

THAT IS VASANTAKA SPEAKING. THE KING MUST BE HERE, TOO LET'S HIDE AND LISTEN TO THEM.

MEANWHILE UDAYANA HAD TAKEN THE PAINTING.

O UDAYANA, YOU SEEM SPELLBOUND! WHY DOES THE PORTRAIT HOLD SUCH FASCINATION FOR YOU?

SAGARIKA HELD HER BREATH.

MY LIFE DEPENDS ON HIS ANSWER. WHAT WILL HE SAY?

THIS MAIDEN EXCELS LAKSHMI IN GRACE. SHE HAS CAPTIVATED MY HEART.

HOW SOOTHING HIS WORDS ARE!

I MUST FIND A WAY OF BRINGING THE KING AND MY FRIEND TOGETHER.

SAGARIKA, WAIT HERE. I WILL GO AND GET THE PORTRAIT.

ALL RIGHT, BUT PLEASE COME BACK SOON.

SUSANGATA WENT INTO THE GARDEN HOUSE AND CAME OUT AFTER A LITTLE WHILE WITH THE KING AND VASANTAKA.

THE KING IS COMING THIS WAY! I HOPE SUSANGATA HASN'T TOLD HIM IT WAS I WHO DREW HIS PORTRAIT.

HOW I HAVE BEEN LONGING TO MEET HIM! AND YET NOW I AM UNABLE TO TAKE A SINGLE STEP TOWARDS HIM.

THE KING APPROACHED SAGARIKA AND HE WAS ABOUT TO TAKE HER HAND IN HIS, WHEN—

QUEEN VASAVADATTA!

THE TWO GIRLS LEFT AT ONCE.

I WAS ONLY JOKING, MY FRIEND. WHY DID YOU LET THEM GO?

BECAUSE, UNWITTINGLY, YOU SPOKE THE TRUTH. THE QUEEN IS INDEED APPROACHING.

QUICK, CONCEAL THE PORTRAIT.

BUT THE CLUMSY VASANTAKA DROPPED THE PORTRAIT.

MY LORD, I CAME THIS WAY TO SEE IF THE NAVAMALIKA CREEPER HAS BLOSSOMED.

LET'S GO TOGETHER.

KANCHANA MALA, THE QUEEN'S COMPANION, PICKED UP THE PORTRAIT AND SHOWED IT TO THE QUEEN.

IT'S MY LORD AND SAGARIKA!

MY LORD, WHO HAS DRAWN THIS?

I TOLD THE KING THAT A SELF-PORTRAIT IS DIFFICULT TO DO. HE DISAGREED— AND TO PROVE HIS POINT HE DREW HIS OWN PORTRAIT.

AND THE GIRL?

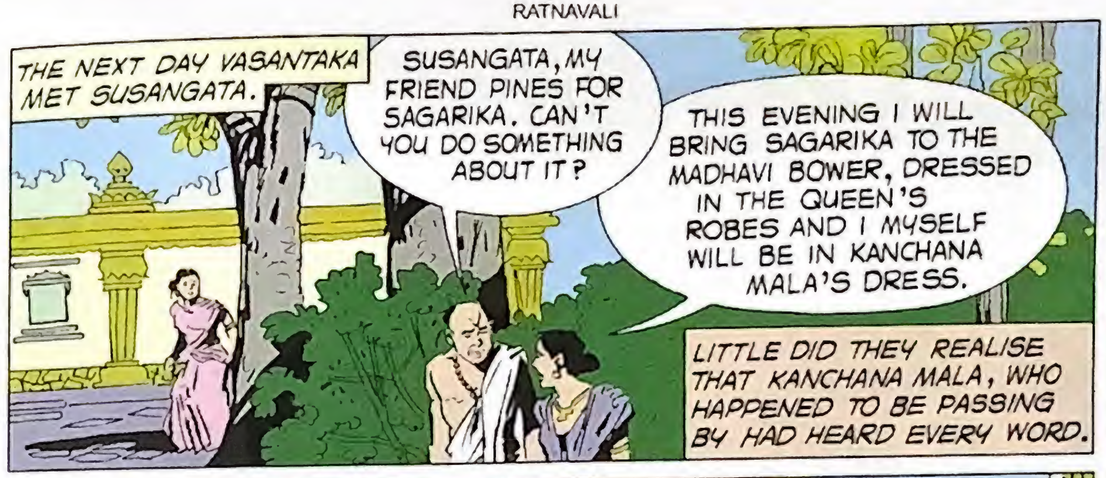
I CONJURED THE GIRL OUT OF MY IMAGINATION.

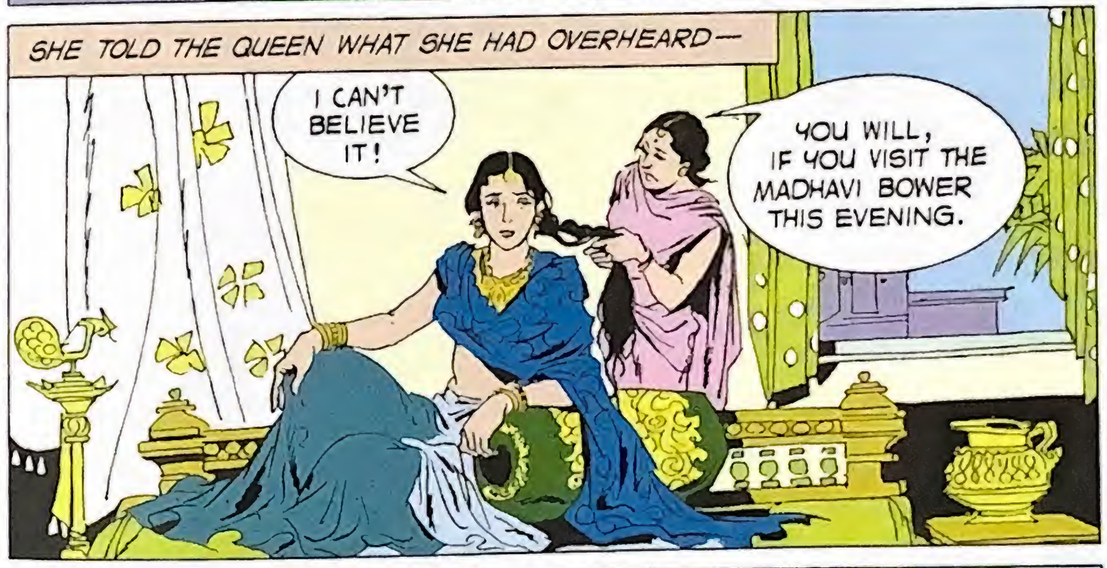
MY LORD, ALLOW ME TO TAKE MY LEAVE OF YOU. I HAVE A BAD HEADACHE.

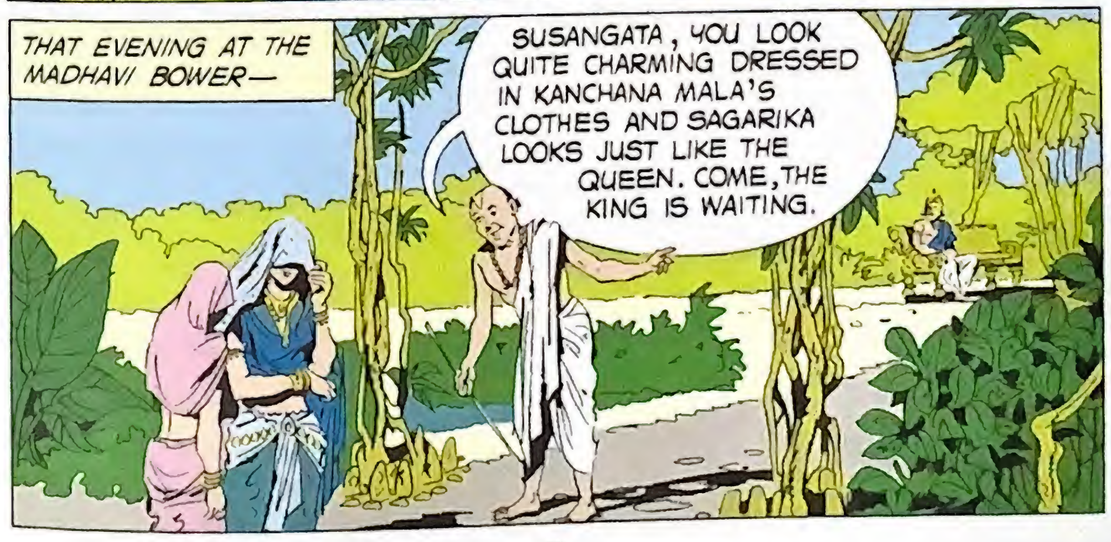
VASAVADATTA, ARE YOU ANGRY WITH ME?

NO, MY LORD. BELIEVE ME, I AM TROUBLED BY A HEADACHE. PLEASE LET ME GO.

THANK GOD! THE UNTIMELY HURRICANE HAS PASSED, LEAVING US UNHARMED!


THE NEXT DAY VASANTAKA MET SUSANGATA.
SUSANGATA, MY FRIEND PINES FOR SAGARIKA. CAN'T YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?
THIS EVENING I WILL BRING SAGARIKA TO THE MADHAVI BOWER, DRESSED IN THE QUEEN'S ROBES AND I MYSELF WILL BE IN KANCHANA MALA'S DRESS.
LITTLE DID THEY REALISE THAT KANCHANA MALA, WHO HAPPENED TO BE PASSING BY HAD HEARD EVERY WORD.


SHE TOLD THE QUEEN WHAT SHE HAD OVERHEARD—
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
YOU WILL, IF YOU VISIT THE MADHAVI BOWER THIS EVENING.


THAT EVENING AT THE MADHAVI BOWER—
SUSANGATA, YOU LOOK QUITE CHARMING DRESSED IN KANCHANA MALA'S CLOTHES AND SAGARIKA LOOKS JUST LIKE THE QUEEN. COME, THE KING IS WAITING.

WHEN VASANTAKA LED THEM TO UDAYANA—

MY DEAR SAGARIKA....

LOOK CAREFULLY, MY LORD! DOES EVERYONE LOOK LIKE SAGARIKA TO YOU?

YOU, VASAVADATTA!

VASAVADATTA, SHOW COMPASSION. PARDON ME FOR ONCE.

WITHOUT SAYING ANOTHER WORD, VASAVADATTA WENT AWAY.

VASAVADATTA LOVES ME. SHE MUST BE HEART-BROKEN. SHE MAY EVEN KILL HERSELF....

MEANWHILE, SAGARIKA APPROACHED THE MADHAVI BOWER DRESSED IN THE QUEEN'S CLOTHES.

I SHOULDN'T HAVE AGREED TO COME HERE. IT IS IMPROPER.

I AM NOW THE QUEEN'S MAID. CAN A MAID EVER ASPIRE FOR THE HAND OF A KING?

I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT THE KING. BUT MY PRESENT STATION IN LIFE DOES NOT PERMIT ME TO MARRY HIM. I'D BETTER PUT AN END TO MY LIFE.

SHE MADE A NOOSE FROM A BRANCH OF THE MADHAVI CREEPER AND SLID IT OVER HER HEAD.

IT IS QUEEN VASAVADATTA! SAVE HER!

VASAVADATTA! NO!

UDAYANA RUSHED TO HER AND LOOSENED THE NOOSE.

THE NOOSE AROUND YOUR NECK MADE MY HEART STOP BEATING YOUR LIFE IS PRECIOUS TO ME.

IT'S THE KING!

LEAVE ME, MY LORD! LET ME DIE!

OH, IT'S SAGARIKA!

THROW AWAY THAT NOOSE FOR MY SAKE.

MY LORD!

MEANWHILE, THE QUEEN HAD DECIDED TO RETURN.

I SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN CRUEL TO MY HUSBAND. HE WAS FULL OF REMORSE. I WILL GO BACK TO HIM.

BUT WHEN SHE REACHED THERE —

SAGARIKA AGAIN! MY LORD, IS THIS WORTHY OF YOU?

LET ME EXPLAIN, MY QUEEN. I MISTOOK HER FOR YOU.

AND I BROUGHT HIM HERE ONLY BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WAS YOU.

AND HERE IS THE PROOF. LOOK AT THIS NOOSE!

KANCHANA MALA, BIND HIM WITH THIS VERY NOOSE...

...AND TAKE AWAY SAGARIKA AND LOCK HER UP.

HOW UNFORTUNATE I AM NOT TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DIE AS I WISHED!

AND KANCHANA MALA LED VASANTAKA AND SAGARIKA AWAY AS UDAYANA WATCHED HELPLESSLY.

BUT THE NEXT DAY THE QUEEN SET VASANTAKA FREE. SUSANGATA WENT TO MEET HIM.

SAGARIKA HAS SENT YOU THIS. YOU HAVE BEEN VERY SYMPATHETIC TO HER. PLEASE ACCEPT IT.

THE JEWEL-NECKLACE? THE SIGHT OF THIS MAY COMFORT MY FRIEND.

VASANTAKA TOOK THE NECKLACE TO KING UDAYANA —

VASANTAKA, YOU MUST PUT IT ON. LOOKING AT IT, I SHALL TRY TO TAKE COURAGE.

LATER IN THE AFTERNOON, A MAGICIAN FROM UJJAYINI CAME TO THE PALACE TO PERFORM BEFORE KING UDAYANA AND QUEEN VASAVADATTA.

HERE YOU SEE BRAHMA, VISHNU AND MAHESHWARA, AND THERE — THE APSARAS DANCING.

YOU FOOL, SHOW SAGARIKA IF YOU WANT TO PLEASE THE KING!

JUST THEN AN ATTENDANT CAME IN.

I BEG YOUR PARDON FOR INTERRUPTING, YOUR MAJESTY. BUT VASUBHUTI, THE MINISTER FROM SIMHALA, SEEKS AN AUDIENCE.

MY UNCLE'S MINISTER! WE SHOULD SEE HIM AT ONCE!

BUT, YOUR MAJESTY, YOU HAVEN'T SEEN MY BEST ITEM! PERMIT ME....

LATER, NOT NOW.

THEN VASUBHUTI ENTERED AND PAID HIS RESPECTS TO UDAYANA.

I BRING BAD NEWS: OUR SHIP HAS SUNK. ONLY YOUR ENVOY AND I MANAGED TO SURVIVE. YOUR BETROTHED, PRINCESS RATNAVALI, WHOM WE WERE BRINGING TO KAUSHAMBI WAS DROWNED IN THE STORMY SEA.

MY BETROTHED...

MY DEAR COUSIN! NO!!

JUST THEN—

FIRE! FIRE! THERE IS A FIRE IN THE INNER APARTMENT.

MY LORD! SAVE SAGARIKA! HER HANDS AND FEET HAVE BEEN BOUND ON MY ORDERS.

UDAYANA DASHED INTO THE INNER APARTMENTS.

SAGARIKA!

BUT... BUT... WHAT KIND OF FIRE IS THIS? NOT EVEN MY HAIR IS SINGED!

AND THE FIRE IS OUT!

MY FRIEND, THIS IS THE TRICK THE MAGICIAN WANTED YOU TO WITNESS — IT'S THE BEST PART OF HIS SHOW.

WHEN VASUBHUTI SAW SAGARIKA —

PRINCESS RATNAVALI!

OH! IS SHE RATNAVALI... MY COUSIN...?

MY LORD, I AM ASHAMED OF MYSELF. FREE HER OF THOSE BONDS.

I'LL DO AS YOU WISH, DEAR.

THEN VASUBHUTI EXPLAINED HOW RATNAVALI CAME TO BE BETROTHED TO KING UDAYANA ON THE INITIATIVE TAKEN BY YAUGANDHARAYANA.

MY LORD, I WONDER WHY YAUGANDHARAYANA TOLD US NOTHING.

HE MUST HAVE HAD HIS REASONS. WE'LL SEND FOR HIM.

YAUGANDHARAYANA CAME AT ONCE —

I HEARD A SAGE PROPHESY THAT THE MAN WHO MARRIES RATNAVALI WILL BECOME THE GREATEST OF KINGS...

...AND THAT'S WHY I TRIED TO BRING ABOUT A MARRIAGE BETWEEN YOU, MY LORD, AND THE PRINCESS OF SIMHALA.

THEN VASAVADATTA LED RATNAVALI TO UDAYANA.

MY LORD, ACCEPT MY COUSIN AS YOUR WIFE.

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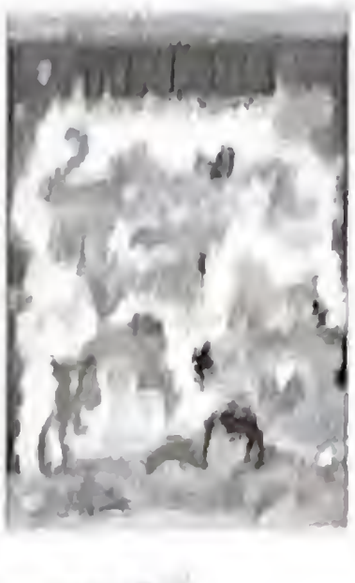

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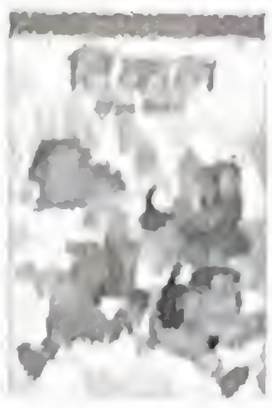

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